

AUDIO TAPE LINE INDEX

TAPE #242

Narrator: Anne Burlack Timpson

Interviewer: Yilderay Erdener

Date: Feb. 10, 1989

Counter  
Number:

- 002 Introduction. Strike against the efficiency experts, who wanted to cut out motions for a job. People who took part in the 1931 strike would know narrator as Anne Burlack because she didn't marry until 1939.
- 020 Her husband--a veteran of the 1937-39 Spanish War. He volunteered. Discussion of the war and no help from the U. S. Half of the Americans who went to Spain didn't come back. Marriage when he returned in 1939. Then he was gone for two and a half years again when he volunteered for W. W. II.
- 073 They talk about a fire in Lawrence.
- 079 Born in 1911 in Penn. Wanted to become a teacher, but her father was only working 2 or 3 days a week ("short time") in the steel mill. She got a job in a silk mill in 1925 for the summer but stayed. Became a weaver. She got \$9 a week; boys got \$12 for the same job. Her father told her she needed a union but she would be fired if she tried to start one. No labor laws.
- 108 Steel mills were not unionized yet. Father told her to become skilled first. She was a weaver.
- 124 She took her father's advice--waited--then when an organizer for the textile workers came, he told her to get people outside during lunch. Apparently one was a stool pigeon, and the foreman was waiting at the door when she came in. She was about 15. He never mentioned the union but said they thought she was unhappy there and terminated her.
- 150 Went to Allentown. Got fired in about 5 months for talking union. Five jobs in four years. Then she couldn't get a job, and the union asked her to become an organizer.
- 159 She was about 18. Since most of the workers were 14-20, she would fit in well. Sent to Scranton. Then to Carolinas. Tent city when workers were "kicked out" of company houses.
- 186 Police wanted to go to the tents to arrest the organizers. They had an armed guard. People there had shotguns right inside the kitchen door. "Goons," slang for deputies--characters who were hired as guards in the mills. They had been to jail or were moonshiners.

- 216 The police and the deputies wanted to search the tents. Guards wouldn't let them in because they didn't have warrants. Deputies started shooting, and strikers or guard shot back. Chief of Police killed.
- 230 Police arrested about a hundred strikers and charged them with murder. Charges dropped for all but 17. Three women.
- 239 Prosecution brought in a wax figure of the Police Chief in his bloody uniform. One jury man went berserk. Judge declared a mistrial. Charges then dropped against the three women. Only seven men went to trial. Found guilty and sentenced to 7-20 years. They "defected." They traveled and were treated like heroes. It was about 1930.
- 275 The union wanted organizers who were single--without responsibilities--to go to South Carolina. She volunteered. Cotton. Conditions were worse there than up north. She and Mary Dalton invited to speak at a mass meeting in Georgia.
- 314 Meeting at Carpenters' Hall in Atlanta. They refused to segregate blacks at the hall. Half dozen policemen with sawed-off shotguns. All of them on the platform arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. Jailed overnight. The county commissioner--a Baptist minister--said they were trying to overthrow the government with equality for blacks and whites. Pre-Civil War law changed to "any person who takes part in the insurrection in the state of Georgia should be punished by death."
- 367 She was scared, but she was pretty confident they couldn't carry it through.

SIDE ONE ENDS AT 378.

## SIDE TWO

- 008 Six weeks in jail incommunicado. No letters. No visitors. No newspapers with anything about labor.
- 028 She got out after 6 weeks. Union carried on a campaign for their right to bail. She was the first one out. A couple she had lived with in California (former I.W.W. members) came and bailed her out. She went on a national tour to raise bail money for the others. She had to come back from St. Louis to stand trial. Trial kept being postponed for years. They figured it was postponed because of the difficulty in making the charge of insurrection stick--they had used words, not weapons.
- 061 In 1932, strikes were breaking out all over. She came north and established herself in Pawtucket, RI and was an organizer. 1931. She became president of the National Textile Workers Union in 1932. She became a communist. Ran for mayor of Pawtucket but didn't win.
- 081 They won the 10 day strike in Lawrence against the efficiency workers. The employers said they would "take the efficiency experts off" if the strikers came back without the union, but "the workers stuck to the union."

- 092 During that time a priest gave a sermon saying that only the meek will reach the kingdom of heaven. He said that they ought to be thankful that the American Woolen Co. gave them a job. The workers didn't work. She wasn't there; she came in with the October strike.
- 109 Edith Berkman. The October strike. Pacific Mills pay cut. Berkman was called the "red flame." Priest called her a woman who wore a red skirt-- "devilish tongue." Urged them not to follow her or they wouldn't go to heaven. Edith was arrested, and the narrator came in along with other organizers. Newspaper said one red flame goes to prison and another rises in her place.
- 126 Edith stayed in the immigration station, where she got tuberculosis. Not released until Roosevelt was elected. She was not arrested for deportation in Feb. but was in the October strike. She was held for deportation, while they were trying to get her out on a medical discharge.
- 147 She was going to be deported and accepted by Poland, which was a fascist country at the time. Poland wasn't ready to accept her. The union felt she would be put into a concentration camp. She was Jewish. They wanted her to go to a country of her choice. Pat Devine and Bill Murdock arrested. More organizers came. Jim Reid, the union president, came.
- 164 Edith Berkman was released for medical treatment when Roosevelt became President. She could not be an organizer. She moved to California.
- 184 Edith Berkman's daughter, Rosalyn Payne, lives in Richmond, VT. Narrator did not have much communication with Edith Berkman.
- 198 Narrator speaks of her own son and daughter.
- 206 Narrator came to Lawrence in 1931 after the strike started. She was "pinch hitting" for Edith Berkman after she got arrested. Organized relief for the strikers. She stayed in workers' homes--one was Mary DeCola, a militant striker.
- 233 Her union was National Textile Workers. She describes its merger with the United Textile Workers (A F of L). Tells how her union was attacked as being communist and the attack was joined by the employers.
- 261 In 1931, several unions in Lawrence. Her union was "class struggle." Her union didn't believe in violence but mass action instead. Compares them to Martin Luther King.
- 291 Mass action to influence scabs. Organizing children to come on the picket line.
- 305 The most militant were the Italians, who had quite a few anarchists among them.

- 312 Banging dish pans in tenement courtyards to mobilize strikers to picket on the early shift.
- 327 Those who didn't strike. Spontaneous start of the October strike. Business men and religious leaders mobilized to put pressure on workers to return.
- 353 She didn't really have contact with the American Textile Workers Union. The unions tried to present a united front. October strike was lost. Those on picket line attacked. "Cracking heads." Water hoses. Union losses and gains.

TAPE ENDS AT 390



- 008 National Textile Workers Union merged with a more conservative union because they were in charge of the national strike, called in Sept. 1931.
- 015 Arthur Wilson says the A.F. of L. came to Lawrence in 1931 and offered to help police arrest members of the National Textile Union. The newspapers took the side of the employers.
- 030 The dynamite and William Wood's involvement in the 1912 strike. In 1931 the Businessmen's Association would try to get people back to work. People arrested.
- 044 Strikers getting bailed out. One who put up bail was a Rhode Island journalist--deportation. One Portuguese woman was refused citizenship because of her criminal record--being arrested multiple times during strike. The woman was arrested for deportation during the McCarthy era, 1950. Portugal was fascist--Poland gave her sanctuary. 18,000 deported in 1931, not just textile workers.
- 089 1934--a number of mills on strike. National Recovery Act, with a Blue Eagle symbol. 1934 Rhode Island headline: "The mighty wings of the Blue Eagle have snuffed out the Red Flame." When she was asked to speak 50 years later, a reporter from the same paper had a headline "After fifty years the Red Flame still burns bright."
- 114 She was paid only until her union disbanded in 1934. They told them to go into the UTW and run the locals the way they had been taught. Purpose in a strike is to keep a plant closed down with mass action. They wanted a union committee from the plant to negotiate ; often the A.F. of L. used someone from the national office. She eventually got a job but lectured, was involved with "strike struggle" (Daily Worker newspaper), then married and raised her children.
- 159 CIO began organizing in 1936 and 1937. John L. Lewis and the miners. NRA established the right to organize without employer interference. 51% signed pledge cards allowed an election for a union to be held.
- 187 It took about 17 years to organize J. P.. Stevens. All the unions boycotted Stevens products.
- 202 Some people just don't like unions, even with new conditions and "wage system." The power of propaganda. The mills were starting to move south by 1929. There used to be 30,000 textile workers in Lawrence. Some blamed the unions for the mills moving. Now the mills are moving to Third World countries.
- 248 By 1931, many American-born sons and daughters of foreign-born workers, but there were still many foreigners with broken English. They had leaflets in 4-6 languages. The meetings were in English. They still had special meetings in other languages. She used to participate in the Polish meetings.

- 304 Her father and mother were both Ukrainians who never learned to speak English well and insisted they speak Ukrainian at home.
- 338 Her mother had seven children, but three died. Around World War I, 50% of the children in working class families did not survive. In 1912, many children who worked in the mills died two or three years after they started. A large percentage died before their fifth anniversary. Many adults lived to be 25-30 because of the bad working conditions. In silk mills, they didn't have lint as in cotton or woolen mills. The lint would settle on their lungs. After W.W.II, the unions discovered problem--called "brown lung." The cotton mills were worse.

TAPE ENDS AT 384

04242

UNIVERSITY OF MASS-LOWELL  
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY  
SHIFTING GEARS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INFORMANT: ANNE B. TIMPSON

INTERVIEWER: Y. ERDENER

DATE: FEBRUARY 10, 1989

A=ANNE

Y=Y. ERDENER

SF-LA-T517

Tape begins with Anne in mid-sentence. The tape has a muffled sound to it, which might make it somewhat difficult to transcribe.

A: February, and the other one was in October. And the one in February lasted only ten days. And they won that strike. It was against the efficiency experts (E: Oh yeah!) that they brought in to clock each motion that the workers made on their machines. (E: Efficiency?) Efficiency experts. (E: Experts) They were suppose to, they would stand over a worker and clock how long it took that worker to do a particular motion for a particular job. (E: Umhm) And uh, then they would uh, work out mathematically how they could produce more by cutting out certain motions, you know, and just doing the most essential ones.

Y: Let me see how it uh (--)

A: It seems to (--)

[The interview is being held inside a car in motion. This is the reason for the muffled sound]

Y: I mean uh, what can we do. So I'm talking to Anne Burlak, or Ann Timpson.

A: Anne Burlak Timpson.

Y: Timpson. Timpson is uh (--)

A: My married name.

Y: Married name. And it is spelled T-I-M- (A: P) P-S-O-N?

A: That's right. Yeah.

Y: And I did not realize that you had your married name. When I called the first time (A: I was Anne Burlak, yes), Anne Burlak.

A: The people of Lawrence, those that took part in the 1931 strike for instance, they wouldn't know me by my married name, because I was not married at that time. I was still single. (Y: Yeah) And they know me as Anne Burlak. (Y: Right) And I didn't get married until 1939, which is uh, you know, some years afterwards.

Y: And is your husband alive?

A: No, he died in 1976. He was a uh, we got married in 1939. He was a Spanish war vet. I don't mean the old Spanish war. I'm talking about the 1937-39 Spanish war, (Y: Uh huh) which was when the democratically elected government of Spain was attacked by uh, by Franco, who was helped by Hitler and Mousellini. So actually if that Spanish war had not ended in defeat for the democratic government of Spain, we may have avoided World War II. (Y: Oh yeah) Because see, the war in Spain ended in 1939. And then some months later, in 1939 is when the Natzis invaded Poland and from there it went on.

Y: Yeah. How did you meet your husband?

A: Well I uh, when the uh, well prior to the election in Spain of the Demo (--) It had been a monarchy you know. And then they had their first election. And he was among the americans that was anti-fascist, anti-Hitler. And then the people of Spain began calling for help. He was one of the americans that volunteered to go and fight in Spain on the side of the democratic government. And there were three thousand americans who volunteered, and about over forty-thousand anti-fascists from all over the world went to Spain and played a very important roll. The unfortunate was that the, that the democratic governments, like our government and England and France did not help democratic Spain at that time. They took, they adopted a policy of hands-off, help to neither side. But you see, Hitler and Mousellini sent troops and all kinds of war materials and planes to help Franco. And so the people of Spain were defeated after two and a half years. And my husband, well he was not my husband at that time you know, but we met in those early years. And he wanted to get married in '37, and I, well none of us thought the war would last long. We thought well they, you know, the Americans, and the British, and the French would come to the aid of Spain, and the war would be over in two or three months. So uh, at my insistence we decided to wait until after the war and get married then. Well Arthur did not come home until 1939. He was there for over two years. Went through many battles. Half of all the Americans who went to Spain didn't come back. They got killed. Um, Arthur was one of the lucky ones that did come back. he was never wounded in the, in the war. [Unclear] and his buddies were killed. The worst thing that happened to him

was that he developed malaria while he was there, and was very sick at one time, but revived and came back. And it was in 1939, the fall of '39 that we got married.

Then of course World War II came along and he wanted to continue fighting against the Fascists, and volunteered to go into the army. He wound up with the third army in anti-aircraft. And again was gone for two and a half years.

Y: Where did he go this time?

A: He went, he went into the uh, you know, he got into the army and he became, in Patton's third army. And uh, they went through a lot of, oh your [unclear].

Y: Let me get some gas.

A: Yeah, sure.

[Tape is shut off and turned on again]

A: In Lawrence the last night. (Y: When?) Last night. (Y: Last night?) Yeah. It said a three decker that had uh, six apartments in it. And several kids, I don't know whether they were, several kids died as a result of it, or whether they were just you know, burned badly and they're in a hospital. It wasn't, it wasn't clear. I suppose it will be on the news again tonight. Yeah, all right.

Y: So you were born in uh, (A: Pennsylvania) Pennsylvania in uh, in 19 (A: 11) 11.

A: Yeah, so that anything I know about 1912 was because of what I've read about it.

Y: Yeah. And uh, how did you start? Did you go to school first?

A: Well of course I went to school. In fact I was hoping to become a teacher. I was interested in becoming a school teacher. But by the time I was fourteen, the steel mills where my father worked went on short time. They were working two days a week. And um, of course you couldn't support a family on two days work a week. So uh, that summer in 1925 I got a job in a silk mill. And I thought I was going to only work during the summer, but when September came around my father was still working only two or three days a week. And I decided that I was just going to stay working. by that time I had learned to become a weaver, and I was making a little more money than what I was hired at. I was hired at nine dollars a week for fifty-four hours. That's ten hours everyday and four hours on Saturday, and for nine dollars a week. And the day I was hired the young men who had got jobs there, the teenage boys would also get jobs in textile mills, and they were getting for the same work, twelve dollars a week.

Y: Really, for the same job?

A: Yes, for the very same job. And when I said, what's the big idea, you know, the foreman who was hiring us sort of you know, smirked. I guess he thought he smiled, and he said, you know Annie that the, that the boys need more money than uh, than girls. And uh, so anyway I came home that evening and I spoke to my father about this. And he said oh, you need a union in that place. But he says, let me give you a bit of advice. He says, don't talk union, because you're going to get fired. If you, you know, as soon as you start talking. There were no labor laws at that time. You didn't have the right to organize. And uh, (--)

Y: Was he a union man, your father?

A: He was very strong for unions. No, the steel industry was not organized yet. It wasn't until the CIO came in uh, that uh, they began to organize. That was later in, in '35, '36, '37, that period that they began to organize steel. So anyway, uh, I took his advice and I kept quiet. I learned (--) He said you have to first learn to be a skilled worker, because as soon as you begin talking union you're going to lose your job. And if you have no skills you're going to have a very tough time getting a new job. So uh, so I kept quiet until. You know, I was a skilled worker, was working on piece work. As soon as they figured that you know how to run the looms, why they'd put you on piece work, and then you got paid whatever you earned. The highest wage I ever made in the mills at that time after I was skilled was weaving (--)

Y: You were a weaver you said?

A: A weaver, yeah. And the highest wage I ever made was between fifteen and eighteen dollars. It would fluctuate in there. Um, so I took his advice and I waited. And then I began, and then I became interested in the, you know, unions. And uh, one time a union organizer from the National Textile Workers Unions came to our town. And he said, well he said I don't know anybody in town mame, but if you can get the people, a group of your friends, close friends to come out during your lunch time and we can sit somewhere near the plant and talk about organizing. We can do that, you know. And so I did, but I was over enthusiastic. So instead of inviting four, or five, or six people, I invited about twelve. And apparently I invited a stool pigeon, because I couldn't vouch for all these people. And when we finished [unclear] we sat eating our lunches on the grass. And when we went back in the foreman was standing in the door. And when I came through he said uh, I want to see you in the office Anne. So I went into the office.

Y: How old were you at that time?

A: I was uh, (Y: not fourteen anymore) maybe fifteen. (Y: oh yeah?) Oh yeah. And uh, so uh, when I came in the office he says uh, you were out there with a bunch of the employees. What were



you talking about? And I said, well it's none of your business. We were having lunch and we were planning a picnic. And he never mentioned the union. He just said, you know, we've come to the conclusion that you are not happy here, and so we're going to terminate you. And you get yourself a job where you will be happy. (Y: Wow) He never gave me the real reason, you know, it was obvious that it was because of the union. [Comment unclear]

Y: So you were fired.

A: So I was fired. And uh, I actually, I went to Allentown to get a job. Allentown is a neighboring city [unclear]. And I got a job in a plant in Allentown. Since I was already skilled I got a job [unclear].

Y: How did you get, transportation was possible?

A: Oh there was uh, there was buses going between [unclear] and Allentown. So I got a job there and I lasted about five months, since I was also talking union there. And so I was fired from that job. Anyway in four years I had five different jobs. And uh, then I couldn't get a job anywhere there, if it meant going to some other city and trying to get a job. And so the union asked me to consider becoming an organizer.

Y: Which union was that? National uh, (A: National Textile Workers Union) National Textile Workers.

A: Yeah. And um, I agreed. And I didn't know, I wasn't too confident how well I would do, because I was still quite young. The union was convinced, by that time I was about eighteen I guess. That uh, since most of the workers were around that age, anywhere from fourteen to twenty, that I would fit in very well. And I was sent to uh, Scranton, [Wilksbury?] that are, where it's a hard coal area. [Unclear] coal area. Men worked in the mines and the women worked in the textile mills. And um, I was there just a few months, and they needed organizers badly down in North and South Carolina, because a whole group of the union organizers who were in [Gastolia?] got arrested there. Because the workers lived in company houses, and when they went on strike they were kicked out of the houses. The union had to raise money nationally and build a tent city and put them up in to these tents. And uh, it was [rest of comment unclear]. So um, we had been in the tent city maybe a week or two. (Y: What was it, tint, tent?) Tent. T E N T (Y: Oh, tent. Oh, okay) They put up tents. (Y: I see) Yeah, somebody's private land who was not connected with the American Wool, or for that matter any Textile Manufacturing. There was no [few words unclear]. And um, so one day after the tents were up for about a week or so the police came and they wanted to go to the tents and arrest the union organizers.

Y: Including you?



A: No, I wasn't down there at that time, no. (Y: You were not down there) No, I was still working [unclear]. So uh, we had an armed guard. [Lots of noise, very difficult to hear informant] You know down in the south people firmly believe in the right to bear arms, but I never saw anybody carry a revolver with them. What they had was, it was shotguns. They used them for hunting small creatures. Squirrels, or some deer hunting. But uh, anyway uh, you walk into almost any workers home, especially in the mill workers, and also in the countryside, and you see that they have shotguns on the wall outside, right inside their kitchen door. They'd open the door, they'd have these racks to keep a gun, or two, or three up there. And uh, so we had this armed guard with shotguns protecting the tent city. We had, the union had notified the governor and the Mayor, that if some of these, we called them goons. (Y: Goom?) Goons, g-o-o-n-s, goons. (Y: Umhm) It's a sort of a slang term for deputies. In the little villages they didn't have regular police. They had, the company hired deputies. Put a badge on them, usually the worse characters. They've been to jail any number of times. They maybe were moonshiners, or broke the law in some ways. And uh, they used them as you know, as guards in the mills. So um, so these, a few police and a group of these deputies came there with shotguns. They wanted to search the area. And the armed guards that were guarding the area said, do you have, do you have any warrant for the arrest of these people? And of course the police were, you know, they were very arrogant. They said they don't need any damn warrant. And the guard said, well you do here. You're going into somebody's private home you have to have a warrant. This is their home. And so they wouldn't let them in. So the uh, deputies took out their, well they had their guns in their hands and they began shooting. And the strikers, or the guard shooting back. And so the strikers got moving, and several guards got moving, and the Chief of Police got shot. He died a couple of hours later in the hospital. And so the um, the um, police arrested about a hundred strikers and strike leaders, and charged them with murder. They organized quite a protest and eventually after some months of holding these people, uh, they dropped the charges against all except seventeen. They ended up putting the seventeen on trial. About five or six organizers, and the rest were mostly [unclear] of the strikers. And they had one trial. Of these seventeen there were three women among them, and fourteen men. And during the trial [few words unclear] prosecution brought in a wax figure of Chief of Police in his bloody uniform. They put you know, the blood stain uniform on this figure, and they had this wax figure. And they brought it in to show to the jury how this policeman looked. And one of the jury men, and we don't know whether he actually, actually went berserk, or whether he put on an act, he went berserk. He jumped up and out of the jury box screaming through the courthouse. And so the judge declared a mistrial. And [unclear] they kept them in prison, [unclear] prison for another week or two. And dropped the charges against the three women, and seven other of the defendants. And they actually went to trial with seven. A second trial with seven defendants. Five organizers and another [unclear] of the top

militant strikers [unclear]. And they were tried and found guilty. And they were sentenced to seven to twenty years in prison. Well they, these strikers, well they were trouble in prison all that time. And so they defected. They didn't show up for trial, they just disappeared. [Comment unclear] They were there for several years. And of course when they first came they were welcomed. They were like heroes. And uh, they traveled over, all over the country and made speeches [unclear].

Y: When was it, in 1929?

A: '19, well by that time it must have been '30.

Y: '34?

A: Late 1929, '30. Anyway that was the period. And um, the union was short of organizers in the south. A few went out from the union. The organizers, they wanted people who were single, who didn't have family, responsibilities. And so I volunteered to go south. [Comment unclear].

Y: South uh, what [unclear].

A: South Carolina. To go to South Carolina to be an organizer.

Y: For uh (--)

A: The union, Textile Union.

Y: Textile. But uh, that was silk, it was (--)

A: No, there it was cotton. (Y: Cotton) Yeah. [Unclear] to organize it. And uh, things were pretty rough down there, uh, that area, the southern [unclear]. The conditions of the workers were much worse than up north. There was a big differential. That says 125. Are we still on 93? [Conversation is being recorded while driving on highway in car] (Y: Yeah) Or course 93 goes all the way into Boston.

Y: So you went there for one year, then you (--)

A: Well I went there, I went there to organize for however long it would take, you know? But uh, what happened was that uh, I was there for about six months, or more. I was invited to speak at a mass meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. And um, it was a meeting called by the union and the Union National Labor Press [rest of comment unclear]. There was a lot of unemployment developing. And uh, and uh, they uh, [unclear]. One was for federal unemployment insurance. And the other one was for federal anti-[unclear] law. And we had a Negro school teacher, a black man who came down to speak about the anti-[unclear] law. And they invited two of us young women who were organizers in the textile workers. I was in South Carolina, and the other woman was from Georgia.

Y: What was her name? Do you remember?

A: Her name was uh, Mary Dalton, D-A-L-T-O-N. And he called a meeting in um, the meeting was called in the Carpenters Hall in Atlanta. We had about a hundred people present. And uh, we didn't follow the [unclear] laws, you know, the laws, the custom, that you always separated the hall if you were bringing in Blacks and Whites. In the same meeting you had to put some kind of a rope or something dividing the hall so that (--)

Y: You mean Black and White.

A: That's right. But we refused to do that. We told people when they came in they could sit anywhere they wanted to. So the audience was all mixed from front to back.

Y: How did you deal with that?

A: Well it just started the meeting, and the chairman was sitting on the platform. The chairman was opening the meeting, telling them what the purpose of it was. And the door was [few words unclear] there's a room with a half a dozen policemen there with sawed-off shot guns. They ordered everyone to stay in their place. And uh, they went up to the platform. We were sitting on the platform, we weren't saying anything. The chairman was up at the front of the hall. And so all of us on the platform were placed under arrest. And we were charged with a very minimum charge of disorderly conduct. Well we weren't disorderly, we weren't, not only weren't we doing anything, we weren't even talking. So they took us to the county jail, which was full to the towers, and held us overnight. And in the morning we appeared before a judge who worked for the court. And the County Commissioner, the uh, the [unclear], the prosecutor, he was the Country Commissioner during the week and he was the Baptist Minister on Sunday. He did his homework. He argued that we couldn't be tried on disorderly conduct [unclear] something much more serious. And that was, we wanted to change the form of government to one that would have social quality, you know, between the Whites and the Blacks. And that was uh, actually uh, [Y: unclear] an overthrow of the government, you see. And he says, we have an insurrection law in Georgia, which was passed, I don't know, it was passed in the time of slavery. And it used to be any slave, or a person of color that takes part in the insurrection against his master, or state, shall be punished by death. [Comment unclear] And uh, after the civil war (--). I mean quite a number of uh, I don't know how many statistics, statistically, how many slaves were actually prosecuted under that law. Some were. And uh, and they changed, after the civil war they it, and they took out the word slave and master, and they said any person who takes part in the insurrection in the state of Georgia should be punished by death.

Y: Were you scared?

A: Yes.

Y: I mean were you scared when you heard that uh (--)

A: Well of course it gave us reason to be alarmed. Although I was pretty confident that they wouldn't be able to carry it through. Not in the United States. Uh Uh. [Chuckles] And uh, I think I was a little more positive that this couldn't happen than my friend Mary. Anyway, so he argued before the judge that we should be held without bail.

Y: End of side A.

SIDE B BEGINS WITH INFORMANT:

A: And uh, so since the law, the insurrection law carried the death penalty if found guilty, he argued that we should be held without bail incommunicato. So for six weeks we were in that jail without trial. Just held without the right to write letters. We couldn't write, we couldn't receive letters. We couldn't receive letters, we couldn't get any visitors. We weren't allowed to read newspapers. We weren't allowed to read magazines, except very innocuous trash like, True Love, other such magazines, you know. And at one point we [few words unclear]. The rules in prisons nationally are that if we subscribe to a newspaper and getting directly from the publisher, they will deliver it, you know? [Few words unclear] your friends. So we went to the warden and, Mary and I went to the warden and said, "we'd like to subscribe to the New York Times." And the warden said, "that radical newspaper! Oh no, no. We can't [rest of comment unclear]." We said, "well what about the Atlanta newspaper." "No, you can't have that." Anything that carries news about labor, or anything else, you know, [unclear]. The worst thing was not having anything to read of any substance, you know? And uh, I used to play solitaire, cards, by the hour.

Y: When did you get out? How did you get out?

A: After six weeks we finally (--) Well my friends were carrying on a campaign. The union was carrying on a campaign for our right to bail. And it had to go to the Georgia Courts, to go to the Supreme Court, and we finally got the right to bail. So when we got the right to bail, it was quite high at four thousand dollars.

Y: At that time?

A: At that time. [Comment unclear] But I was the first person bailed out, because my friends in radio. I used to live with an older couple in radio who used to be IWW members out in California. And they um, uh, they came out there, they road down and they bailed me out. Then I went on a national tour to raise money to bail all the other people out.



Y: Did you?

A: Yeah. I went on a tour and I raised enough money to pay for the bail bondsman. We didn't raise enough money to put cash down for the bail, you know, to bail.

Y: How much did you need?

A: It was, well we had to have ten percent. It was four or five thousand dollars for six people. Twenty-four thousand, or thirty thousand that had to be raised for bail. And the bondsman took at least ten percent. So we had to have over two thousand dollars to uh, [unclear] to the bondsman. Anyway I was on tour for uh, I don't know, three months, four months.

Y: You toured all of the United States?

A: Yeah, but I never got to the west coast, because when I was in Saint Louis, Missouri, they called a trial and I had to come back to Atlanta to stand trial. When we got there the trial was postponed. And they kept postponing that trial for years. Every time it would be set for a certain date, the date would come and they would postpone it again. They tried to figure out. They never explained to us why they were postponed. They weren't ready they said. We figured out that the reason they were postponing it is that they really didn't know how to carry on a trial where we would be charged with insurrection. Where there would be four Whites and two Blacks, two women, two White men and two Black men. And um, and how they could make it stick. We were suppose to be organizing an insurrection, you know. Well an insurrection [few words unclear] words. [Unclear] weapons. But they couldn't charge us with any weapons. We didn't [unclear] weapons. Anyway uh, in 1932 it was, every time you know, I came up strikes were breaking out all over. That's the most important [unclear] in New England. And uh, I came north and I worked in Bedford for a short time. And then uh, and then I went to Rhode Island to live, because there were uh, strikes breaking out there, and maybe they'd need help in organizing. So I established myself in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and uh, was a union organizer there.

Y: 1930'a?

A: 1931. (Y: '31?) Yes, in '31. [Unclear] was our organizer in Lawrence. Then being an organizer in Bedford, and in Pennsylvania and so on, Jersey, Patterson, in the state of New Jersey. [Unclear] And uh, uh, (--)

Y: So you were the president of the communist party in Rhode Island in 1931?

A: No. No, no, I was the organizer.

Y: According to one article [unclear] gave me, they say that you were the president at some point. I don't know what it is.

A: Well I became the president of the National Textile Workers Union. I was elected in 1932. '31 I was just an organizer.

Y: But uh, it was not the communist party they say (--)

A: Well I became a communist. And uh, I ran for office. I ran for Mayor of Pawtucket.

Y: Did you win?

A: [Laughing] No, hardly. Um, but it was in 1931 that [unclear] first strike. And it was (--)

Y: In Lawrence?

A: In Lawrence, [unclear]. And it was a (--)

Y: It was in February you say?

A: February strike. And that only lasted ten days, that strike. And they won the strike. That was the one against the efficiency experts. And uh, (--)

Y: What else did you hear about that strike in February?

A: Well uh, well the February strike they organized big vast picket lines. And uh, where the employers tried to get workers to come back to work. They said if they would come back without the union, they would take the efficiency experts off. But the workers stuck to the union. They said, "yeah, that's just a trick to get us in. And then you'll uh, you know, go ahead." They weren't offering them any increased wages, or anything. And uh, it was during that time [few words unclear] strike that one of the priest in Lawrence preached a sermon. And when she uh, said that only the meek children, only the meek will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Y: Meek meaning?

A: Meek means that you are very passive. You don't fight, you don't fight back. He said you ought to be very thankful that the American Woolen Company established their mills here, built their mills here and gave you foreigners a job.

Y: What was his name you say?

A: The priest was, according to the newspapers, I didn't remember the name of the priest. I wasn't here at the time. You know, I came in during the October strike. But the newspapers said it was a Minister, a priest by the name of McDonald. And uh, the workers didn't accept that [unclear]. A lot of them were members of his

church. And they said to him, well father, you take care of our souls, we will take care of our economic problems. And so they stuck together and that didn't work. [Comment unclear]

Y: So Edith Bergman was the organizer of February?

A: [Unclear]

Y: Well according to the articles which I read here and there, they talk about Pacific Mills of Lawrence, some kind of pay cut. 10%, or something.

A: Well that's, that's what happened in the October strike.

Y: It was?

A: October. In October, the next strike. (Y: Yeah) The second strike. So anyway um, that's when she was called the [red flame]. She was called, the priest called her a woman who wore a red skirt and rules the devilish tongue. And he urged that they not follow her because they would not go to heaven. So when Edith was arrested in October, uh, and I came in at that time, there were several other organizers came too. There was uh (--)

Y: All from the National uh (--)

A: From the National Textile Workers Union. There were two men came. One was Pat Devine, an Irish name, and Bill Burdock. And uh, so the newspapers carried the story saying um, one red flame goes to prison when Edith was arrested, another rises in her place. And ever since then Edith stayed in the immigration station [unclear]. And uh, she got TB while she was in the immigration station.

Y: You know how long she was there?

A: Yes. She didn't get released. We had a big campaign to get her released, especially after she got TB, that's tuberculous. (Y: Umhm) But she wasn't released for medical reasons until after Roosevelt was elected, and Francis Perkins became the um, the Secretary of Labor. Secretary of Labor. Stay on 83, uh 93, and 3. See, you're already entering the city, but you're still on the highway. [Comment unclear]

Y: That's all right. So she stayed for a long time?

A: Yeah, for several years uh, (Y: in jail, huh?) in jail. And they uh (--)

Y: Several years.



A: Well they moved her to a hospital, but she was (--) Well in the February strike I think she got out. She was not charged for, you know, she was not arrested for deportation in February. She was arrested, she was arrested on the Boston Common. And she was bailed out, and so she continued working. And then in October, it was during the October strike that she was, they decided to arrest her for deportation.

Y: But they never could deport her?

A: Well they were holding her for deportation, and we were trying to get her out on the medical discharge. And uh, you know, you have to be accepted by a certain country. And she was going to be deported to Poland. And Poland at that time was actually a fascist country.

Y: Why, why to Poland?

A: Because that's where she was born. She was to be sent back to the country of her birth. And uh, the country had to accept her. And Poland was not ready to accept her, but they would have eventually. But the union felt that if she was sent to Poland at that time she would most likely be put in a concentration camp, or with the um, um, (--)

Y: Was she Jewish?

A: She was Jewish also, yeah. Or she would be uh, executed, you know. So we were trying to get it change so she could go to a country of her choice that would accept her. And uh, in the meantime uh, she was held. She got this TB and uh, the strike was going on. I was there. They also arrested Pat Devine. And they arrested Bill Murdock. We had to sent more organizers in, you know. Jim Reed, who was the president of our union came. And several other organizers. And the strike went on for some time.

Y: Did she die on Tuberculosis?

A: Uh, no. Eventually in 1935, after Roosevelt was president and Francis Perkins (--) (Y: unclear) But it wasn't as late as 1935. It must have been a little earlier. But it was af (--) It must have been at least 1933, now that I think of it. When Roosevelt was, you know, Roosevelt got elected in '32, and (Y: unclear) he took, and he became president in January of 1932. (Y: two, or three?) '33. '33. And it was when he was president, and Francis Perkins was Secretary of Labor, that we finally got her released. And it was definitely '33. And um, she was released on the basis that she would get medical treatment and uh, would not function as a union organizer. And she couldn't function anyway, because you know, [unclear]. And at that time when she got out she went to California. She had some relatives and close friends who were there. And uh, I never saw her after that. She lived in California and she died a couple of years ago.

Y: A couple of years ago? (A: Yes) You said that her daughter is in Vermont?

A: Her daughter lives in Richmond, Vermont. Her name is Rosalyn Payne, P-A-Y-N-E. I guess that's her married name. She has, she herself has a daughter. Now I don't know whether her husband is living or not, or whether they're divorced. I somehow remember [unclear] on that subject. But I did meet her. She came down here one time. (Y: Who is she, the daughter?) The daughter, yeah. And I met her, and I correspond with her occasionally. Not frequently.

Y: Did you correspond with uh, (A: Edith?) yeah.

A: The first uh, the first year or so. And then you know, I got very busy and we exchanged Christmas cards, but that's about all, you know. I never even knew that she had a daughter. Her daughter was born in California after she had got there. Because she's uh, she's about the same age as uh (--) I have a son and a daughter. My daughter is 45 and my son is 43. So.

Y: Where are they?

A: My daughter is in Portland, Maine, and my son lives in Colorado. He's a professor at the university.

Y: What does he teach.

A: Educational psychology. She works, he works with young teachers and helps prepare them to become effective teachers.

Y: What about your daughter?

A: The daughter uh, well she's now working for a publishing company.

Y: Editor like, or (--)

A: She helps people who come in to get things printed and she organizes it for them so [few words unclear].

Y: Well let's go to Lawrence uh, 1931. Uh, so you came in October, or before October of [unclear]?

A: No, no. It was after the strike started. The strike started in October. And so it (--) I mean after Elizabeth, and after Edith got arrested. So I uh, was you know, pinch hitting for her. But I didn't live in Lawrence. That is I'd stay three or four days and I'd go back to Rhode Island. And that's where my home was. And then I'd come again the following week, because we had frequent meetings with the strikers. We'd have to organize relief for them. I helped to organize you know, relief for the strikers.

Y: Where did you sleep? Where?

A: In Lawrence? I stayed in workers homes.

Y: Workers homes?

A: Yeah. Mary Decola was one of the people that I worked with. Gina said that she finally reached her. I didn't, as I told you also, I didn't know whether Mary Decola was dead or alive, because she was a women that's already in her late eighties, or so.

Y: How do you spell her last name?

A: D-E-C-O-L-A. That's Italian. That's her married name. I don't know what her original name was.

Y: Yeah. So she's alive in Lawrence?

A: She's alive in Lawrence. Gina has her phone number and her address. She lives near the Methuen border. She'd be an interesting woman to talk to. She's kind of hard of hearing though.

Y: What was her role?

A: She was just and rank and file striker, but she was a very militant woman she showed up on the picket lines every day. And uh, played uh, you know, a positive role, right?

Y: There were other unions in Lawrence during the 1931 strike. United Textile Workers. (A: Yeah, they were very) The American Textile Workers, and the National Textile Workers. So three.

A: The United Textile Workers were the AFofL Union at that time. And they weren't very popular.

Y: What uh, so the name was uh, The United Textile Workers, (A: United Textile Workers) but it was in fact uh, (--)

A: Well it was part of the AFofL. Yeah. They were in existence for quite sometime. We tried to, in Rhode Island, well I was there until after 1934. In 1934 there was a general strike of textile workers. (Y: In Rhode Island, or?) Well all over the country. Four hundred and fifty thousand textile workers. That didn't mean that every single plant was on strike. But it was a general strike lead by the United Textile Workers. And since we wanted unity, uh, we finally merged our union with the United Textile Workers. The union gave up on [unclear]. The employers claimed they would not negotiate with us. Workers had to be numbers. Real patriotic american union. And the AFofL Union, the United Textile Workers [unclear] as the patriotic american union. And they used to uh, join with the employers in attacking us as being communist and uh, (Y: unclear) you know, that we were (--) Oh yeah, they would tell

the employers, now if you don't sign a contract with us, the communist will come in here with their union and then you're going to have a lot of trouble. But we will actually bring some order in the mills, you know? And um, so they sing up with the UTW at that time.

Y: What year was that? 19 uh (--)

A: Well 19, this was already 1934. But in Lawrence in '31 it's true, there were several unions. We tried to get the unions all to work together. But apparently we weren't skilled enough. And uh, and we criticized the other unions because they didn't follow a militant policy, you know. (Y: Did you uh) There was such a thing as class collaboration, and class struggle. And we were definitely of class struggle. Now you stay straight ahead, going in the center. To go to my place you could also go left, but uh, I wanted to peel on the '93.

Y: So you were really militant while they were in Lawrence? (A: Well we uh) I mean did you do anything with guns and bombs, and uh.

A: No ho ho, never, never. We didn't believe in violence of that kind. We believed in mass action. Very much like Martin Luther King you know, except we didn't say, "turn the other cheek". (Y: Umhm) Although he also took part in(--) You know, we used to have discussions about this role of Martin Luther King later, because some people figured he was too much of a pacifist. But uh, he wasn't a typical pacifist. He organized mass action. He organized these mass marches, you know, and of course they would either sit down on the road in thousands so that nothing could move. (Y: Yeah) And he just said, you know, we got to have unity. We have to use pacifism. He was a supporter, or admirer of Ghandi of India.

Y: He, Martin Luther?

A: Martin Luther King was, yeah. And sometimes he even said, "love your enemy." [Chuckles] But uh, (--)

Y: I heard [sound of horn blowing] a rumor in Lawrence that you chased a reporter or something? Is it just a gossip?

A: I didn't chase anybody. No, what the strikers did though, you know, we told them that they you know, should not take violent means against the scabs, but they should try to either convince them, or by mass action push them away from going into the mills, you know. (Y: Umhm) And we used to organize the children to come on the picket line. [Sound of ambulance racing by] We organized young kids, you know, ten, twelve, fourteen, to go, (--) Stay in the middle lane, because you're going to uh (--) [Unclear], but you're going to stay on the same highway. We would organize

youngsters that would go to the areas where the scabs lived, and they would uh, (--)

Y: Which ethnic group was mostly (--) I mean was there any particular ethnic group which did not participate in the strikes?

A: Well I think to most militant of the groups were the Italians. (Y: Yeah) There were quite a few anarchist among them, you know, and we had to keep after them to make sure that they didn't go off on their own. But uh, we managed to keep them following the union policy. Uh, by the way, there was an interesting way that we mobilized people for the picket lines for early shift, you know, like six o'clock in the morning. We would have a crew of union members, reliable union members that would go into an area where they had these tenements. Sort of a square block of tenements. And there would be court yards, you know. Where tenements would be organized, it would be built in like a U. (Y: Yeah) And if you go in the court yard you were facing the back doors of all of the tenements on three sides. And uh, we'd have them go there with dish pans and wooden spoons. And they would bang on them. Time for the picket line, you know? And that would wake up the people. And people didn't have telephones. You couldn't call them and say hey, time to go to the picket line. So that's the way we mobilized them, you know, some people in each of these areas. Uh, among those that, well I don't, I didn't like to say that any one particular nationality did more scabbing than others.

Y: I mean that is easy to generalize. Usually it is not correct. But uh, for example I hear that the Irish people mostly stayed away, or the Germans, even in 1912, during the 1912 strike did not really participate as much as (--)

A: Well they were, the english were more skilled workers. They made a little more money. They didn't make so much. Even that woman who said that she made seventeen dollars, I think she's, her memory is not so lucid on that. Because in the 1912 strike (Y: yeah) you had to really be uh, perhaps the loom fixers made seventeen and eighteen dollars, but not the ordinary workers.

Y: But the skilled workers as a general, tended not to participate in the strikes, because (--)

A: Oh no, most of them, we had (--) After all there were what? Thirty thousand textile workers in Lawrence. And during the thirty-one strikes the mass majority went on strike. The uh, October strike started spontaneously. One of the anarchist I guess pulled the switch and shut off the power and began yelling, strike. And that was when they got ten percent wage cut. All the mills put up notices of a ten percent wage cut. And they also mobilized the businessmen, the uh, religious leaders to put pressure on the workers to go back to work. You know, various arguments. And um (--)



Y: What was your relationship with American Textile Workers Union?

A: I didn't have any contact with them that I remember. If it was it must have been very casual. We tried to have joint meetings and uh, you know, have unity between all the unions so that we would present a united front you know, to the employer. And uh, (--)

Y: According to the book they had four to five thousand members at that time.

A: The American Union? (Y: The American Textile Workers and uh (-  
-) Uh huh. I think that was a little exaggerated.

Y: The United Textile Workers Union is suppose to uh, about nine thousand. And uh, International Textile Workers, they, there's a person, the author's name is Wilson. He says, the National Textile Workers Union had [few words unclear].

A: Well that's the propaganda that was starting out, you know.  
(Y: Right. Right) No, we had a large number of workers who signed up and participated. The trouble was that after (--) That strike by the way was lost.

Y: Which one, in October?

A: The October strike, because there was so much pressure put on the workers. They uh, they attacked the picket lines you know, viciously. Cracking heads and they used water hoses on the strikers. They starved them. So that there was so much pressure put on the workers that eventually they went back to work. And none of the unions really gained after that strike. You know, the union lasted for a period, but a year later there was uh, very few members left. Now the UTW did gain some membership a little later, but they were not as, as you know, as widespread as say this author says.

Y: I thought the AFOL, (A: AFofL, yeah)

TAPE ONE-SIDE TWO ENDS

SF-LA-T518

Y: So then the National Textile Workers Union seemed to be a progressive union compared with others. And then you merged with a union which was the most conservative union. I mean uh (--)

A: That's true, but that was the union in charge of the national strike. And they weren't going to merge with the you know, unions that were smaller than them. Nationally they uh, they were an even union. Because they were, they were in charge of that strike. They called the strike in September 1934. And uh (--)

Y: This Arthur Wilson. He says um, AFoL came in 1931 to Lawrence and offered help to police to arrest the communist, or something.  
(A: To arrest the members of the National Textile Union). Yeah

A: That's why the police got very brutal. The newspapers agitated the workers to you know, to join the DPW.

Y: Yeah, and that was my question. Now how was the attitude of the mass media. I mean uh, (--)

A: Oh the newspaper were all [unclear].

Y: Newspapers, Boston Globe, and other newspaper, what was your uh (--)

A: The newspapers actually took the side of the employers, you know.

Y: They did?

A: Oh yeah. Yeah, in the main. There may have been an article here and there. The Nation was a newspaper, it was a magazine [unclear], had some articles you know, that were [unclear].

Y: The attitude of the press was mostly supportive of the mill owners huh?

A: Yeah. Yeah. And you know that dynamite scare that they had in 1912 that they charged the strikers with [unclear], actually they were able to discover that William Wood, (Y: Right) the owner of the (Y: Right, umhm) Wood Mill was involved in bringing the dynamite. He and some of his uh, lackies as I would call them, brought they uh, uh, dynamite into the, into Lawrence. And they framed up uh, they arrested strikers on it. (Y: Yeah) And then when it was uh, you know, it was exposed, it was quite a, quite a black eye you know, for the uh, for the uh, mill owners.

Y: Were there such tricks during the 1931?

A: Oh yeah. Well uh, not, not the dynamite, but people were constantly getting arrested you know. The Businessmen's Association would issue proclamations urging people to go back to work and so forth. (Y: Unclear) Yeah. Knowing you can't go straight, you go to the right.

Y: I talked to a lady in Lawrence (A: Yeah) and she said her grandmother told her that there was a, there was a lady in Lawrence who bailed out the strikers. And her grandmother said, oh this lady, her place should be heaven, because each time the strikers were thrown into jail, she went and bailed out the strikers. Do you know anyone during that time?



A: Well we did manage to get you know, people who were liberals who would bail people out. But uh, I don't know that it was only one person, you know. (Y: Yeah) And I don't know who she would be talking about. There was one woman in Rhode Island that was a journalist actually. And she came from a wealthy family. And uh, well she married a working man, but uh, she had quite a bit of wealth. And she put up bail around that period and later. And she, actually she put up bail for a couple of people who were [unclear] for deportation. Like uh, Eulah Figoritto, who was uh, who had been a striker in New Bedford in 1928, and then in the postwar period after World War II. She was, she was Portuguese. She was brought here as a child and worked in the mills when she was a teenager in the 1928 strike. And then in 19 uh, and she never became a citizen because uh, [unclear]. Uh, she never became a citizen because uh, when she applied for citizenship when she got to be twenty-one, they said that she had been, she had a criminal record. Now the only criminal record she had was the strike. She was arrested at least a half a dozen times during the New Bedford strike. And each time was bailed out. And then after the strike they dropped the charges. But during the strike she was in jail at least a half a dozen times, maybe more. So that was her criminal record. So they, the government refused to give her citizenship papers. And in 1950, during the McCarthyite period, McCarthy was a senator from Wisconsin, uh, she was arrested for deportation. And she was going to be deported to Portugal. And Portugal had a fascist government. And so she applied for a choice of country that would accept her.

Y: What was her name you said.

A: Euleili, Euleili Figoritto. That's a Portuguese name. And uh, and so Poland offered her sanctuary, you know, (Y: yeah) and so she went to Poland. She still lives in Warsaw in Poland. She didn't go to Portugal. And there were quite a few people. By the way, there were eighteen thousand people who were deported in 1931. I don't mean just textile workers.

Y: From uh, the United States?

A: From the United States to various countries. [Comment unclear]

Y: Yeah. Thirty thousand?

A: Eighteen, eighteen thousand.

Y: Eighteen thousand?

A: In 1931 alone. There were many more deported I guess, you know, if you take different years when they were.

Y: What about the 1934 you were talking about?

A: Well in 1934 I was in Rhode Island. You know, I was still living in Rhode Island. And there was uh, quite a number of the mills were out on strike. And that's when the National Recovery Act was introduced. It was called the NRA. And they had a symbol, a big eagle, and it usually appear on posters as the Blue Eagle. And at one point during 1934, the local paper in Rhode Island carried a headline, "The mighty wings of the Blue Eagle have snuffed out the red flame. And uh, and uh, fifty years later, or close to fifty years later I was invited to speak in I guess it was in Rhode Island. I was already living in Boston, and I was invited to speak. They were going through some labor history. And uh, there was a reporter there who wanted to interview me, and he did. And I said, well, I showed him the clipping from his paper. Maybe he wasn't even working in the paper at that time. But this paper that has said, The Providence Journal, that had said that the Blue Eagle had snuffed out the red flame, and see I am still making speeches and involved in labor struggles, and so forth. And so he had a, he wrote an article and he put on the headline, "the uh, red, after fifty years the red flame still burns bright." [Laughs]

Y: I saw that article.

A: Oh you did. [Laughing]

Y: Well actually in that article he claims that you were the president of the communist party of Rhode Island. That was from that article.

A: Well maybe so. Well it was, but it was talking about 1934, not earlier.

Y: He doesn't give a date.

A: Yeah, yeah. No, it's possible. I don't remember whether that article carried that story. Anyway.

Y: So who paid you then. I mean you did not work in the textile mill, so the union paid you.

A: No, not (--) The union paid me only as long as we, we had the union. The union disbanded in 1934, and went into the, wherever we had locals we told them to go into the UTW, but run their locals the way they were, they learned to run them. We had no objections to being in the UTW, but we didn't agree with some of the policies. So we said, when you belong to a union local you must guarantee that you control the decisions of that union. The organizers are you agents, your you know, your employees and organizers. You had to insist that the organizers follow the policy that your local established. It was a question of how to approach the um, um, negotiations with the employers and how to act during strikes. Your purpose during the strike is to keep the plant closed down. And you keep it closed down to uh, mass picket lines and mass action. You don't keep it closed by uh, let's say, well using two

people on a picket line, or negotiating, or in the AFofL a lot of times the union leader, the organizer, or some official that comes from the national office, if it's a big plant, um, negotiates and doesn't even take workers committee with him. We were very careful that any negotiations with employers would be between a union committee from that plant, and the employers. So um, (--)

Y: So who paid them?

A: Well as long as I was working for the union I was paid by the union. Otherwise I got a job and uh, and uh, you know earned my money and uh, carried on certain activities. Lectures. Then there was strike struggle. We'd help to issue material on it. Um, we had a newspaper called "The Daily Worker" which uh, which carried labor news all the time. To this day it's called "The People's Daily World" now. It carries articles in supportive labor, struggles. (Y: Yeah) So that was it. And after I got married there was a period for awhile when uh, well my husband was the bread winner. And uh, and uh, then I had two children. He was away uh, see, one of my children, my daughter was born during the war. And he was overseas. He left for overseas actually the weekend after she was born. And uh, we lived in Boston. so I stayed home you know, with the, with the baby. And I collected my uh, his pay, which he assigned you know, as a soldier.

Y: She was, she was your first baby?

A: My first born, yeah, '43. She was born in '43. My son was born after my husband got back from the wars. He was born in '46.

Y: What about CIO. Um, not CIA, but [laughs].

A: Well uh, no CIO, yeah. The CIO actually began organizing uh, in 1936 and '37 were their banner years. Um, the uh, ~~Johnna Lewis~~ *John H. Lewis* you know, among the miners in Pennsylvania, and Ohio, and that area there, and they used to issue leaflets saying um, your president wants you to join the union. That's why NRA established uh, established the right to organize. That's when we got written into *LAW* ~~Logue~~ the right to organize without interference from the employers.

Y: What year was that? I know it was uh(--)

A: That was around 1937, '36 perhaps. The unemployment insurance law was passed in 1935. (Y: five, yeah) Yeah. Social Security and unemployment insurance. And most of the laws.

Y: And when did they, when did they come into affect? I mean uh, they were entered as 1935, yeah, but uh(--)

A: Well even to this day there are some employers who still try to use dirty tricks you know, to keep people from organizing. But uh, uh, the um, the CIO drive had a much easier time, because the law

said that all they had to do is to get pledge cards signed. And uh, if you got over 51% pledge cards, that means <sup>CARDS</sup> where people said, "I am ready to join the union", or they, or they do join the union. And as soon as we got over 51%, which was the majority, then you would go to the National Labor Relations Board and ask for the right of having an election in the plant. And uh, and then if the workers voted for the union, the union could come in. And according to the law the uh, the manufacturers couldn't keep them out. But you know that swindle they had with J., J. P. (Y: Stevens?) Stevens took many many years. And it wasn't until just a few years ago(--)

Y: What was the struggle? Uh, you mentioned (--)

A: The struggle over the right of union to resist in the plants. They didn't want any union in their plants. And uh, (--)

Y: I thought they never had union?

A: Well the union(--). When the CIO came, the CIO tried to organize and it took them something like seventeen years before they, before they were able to organize J. P. Stevens. They have a union there now. But I imagine that the uh, people just refused to, you know, the management just refused to accept [unclear].

Y: Yeah.

A: We boycotted, the unions, all the unions boycotted J. P. Stevens Products for a number of years. And I remember the campaign a few years ago where we [unclear].

Y: How do you explain the reaction of some people? Although union fought for them and uh, brought new conditions, and new wage system, and all of these things, some people just don't like the unions. And I don't understand.

A: That's hard to understand, yes. But you know, the power (--)

Y: Uh, I couldn't explain that. How do you say it?

A: No, [unclear] where this traffic light is right here, make a right turn. (Y: here?) Yeah. Uh, that's hard to understand. But you know, the power of propaganda, being bombarded every day, the newspapers. And also the fact many mills began to move. As a matter of fact the mills were already in the process of moving down to the south.

Y: 1930 uh?

A: By 1929 they were moving south.

Y: But they were cotton mills.

A: Cotton mills, yeah, but eventually (--)

Y: They moved in 1920's, yeah.

A: But eventually even the uh, eventually the American Woolen Company also moved their mills. After all you used to have thirty thousand textile workers in Lawrence.

Y: 1953, yeah.

A: And uh, and now you have uh (Y: straight?), yes, straight here. I'm sorry. I have a red light so I wasn't (--) Um, the, the mills began to move. And actually, I asked when I was here last, last week, how many textile workers in Lawrence now? And uh, somebody mentioned that there was one small mill. (Y: Yeah, there is one. Malden) And that one only has several hundred workers? It's not uh, it's not a huge mill.

Y: No, it's a small mill.

A: Small mill, yeah. So that means that now all those buildings that are still in Lawrence, you're going to go straight ahead, all those buildings that are still in Lawrence are uh, they have a lot of small plants inside. Garment plant, the plastic plant, and various other kinds of plants.

Y: Actually they blame, some of the peoples, not everyone, but some people blame unions. And they say that is why the mills moved on, because they asked too much.

A: Oh, they asked too much. They thought that was high wages that they were making?

Y: Yeah, that is their explanation why. They don't see the big picture, but they see uh, you know, locally.

A: But you see now, for instance, in the 20's and 30's the mills, the textile mills were moving south. Others were too, but it was the textile primarily that were moving south. And um, and now they're moving out of the southern states. And where are they moving now?

Y: Third world.

A: They're moving to Taiwan, to South Korea. (Y: Turkey) Yeah. Brazil. Various countries. Uh, get into this left lane.

Y: Yeah, the third world became the south now.

A: Yeah, because there they still can get the people to work for a dollar a day, or uh, you know. And now at this traffic light take a left turn. I think what I'm going to have to do is uh, not (--)



Tape is turned off and on again. Begins with interviewer in mid-sentence:

Y: Say that some of the companies in Lawrence, they try to get various nationalities so they cannot unionize. That is uh (--)

A: Well that was the, that was the story in 1912. But they even used it in '31. Although in '31 they already had many american born, [clears throat] they had many american born workers. You know, the daughters and sons of these foreign born workers. But even in '31 you had a lot of foreigners that spoke very broken english. And they worked in the mills. So, so we had to, even in '31 we issued leaflets in anywhere from four to six different languages.

Y: Even '30, in '31?

A: In '31, yes. In order to make sure that the workers understood what, you know, what the issues were. (Y: Yeah) This is Franklin Park. [Comment unclear]

Y: But the meetings were held in english.

A: The meetings were always in english, but uh, then we have to have separate (--) Go slow, you going to make a right turn. This is [unclear] Street. This is [unclear]. We have nursing homes around here. And this building. I live in that house that has a porch sticking out. It's right on the right. [Comment unclear] Park here, or here. So we still had to, even in '31 we had to have special meetings of the Polish people and of the Italians, and uh, Franco Belgians. [Unclear] I remember especially the Italians and the Poles needed meetings in their own language. Uh, let's go in for a short time, or do you want to continue talking here.

Y: Uh, I don't want to tire you too much. (A: Yeah, yeah, umhm) I mean you did uh, did you talk to Eartha also this morning? Eartha [unclear] interview?

*Denzler*  
A: Oh Eartha. Well actually no, because there was a short period. So we went and had lunch. And she said since you were planning to interview me that uh, may not be necessary, you know. Um, she might have some special questions. I imagine she would have questions primarily about the various ethnic groups. And uh (--)

Y: Well let me hold that. You are tired of holding that. [Both laugh] Maybe we can talk a little bit here and then um, um (--)

A: All right. I want to get you back on the road before it gets dark.

Y: So in Polish and Italian you say uh (--)

A: Mostly, as I remember, because I used to participate in the Polish meetings, because I could understand Polish. Although I was not fluent in Polish, I was uh (--)

Y: How did you learn?

A: Because it's close to Ukrainian, and I knew Ukrainian. You see my parents were Ukrainians. (Y: I didn't know that) And if you know one Slavik language you can pretty much pick up other Slavik languages. So I understood people who spoke. Not fluently, but I understood people who spoke Slavic, Polish, Russian, ~~Ukranian~~ Ukrainian. You know, all those languages have a sort of a natural ~~Ukrainian~~ root. And then of course there were the Romance Languages. That's the Italians, and the Portuguese, and uh, uh, what else is close to Italian? Anyway.

Y: Your father and mother both they were?

A: They were both Ukrainians, yeah, yeah. (Y: Oh I see) My father came to this country in 1908. (Y: 8?) And my mother came in 1909. Yeah. They were married in the Ukraine. Actually in Austria, Hungary.

Y: What were their names?

A: The name was Burlak.

Y: I mean their first names.

A: Oh, Harry. My father's name was Harry, and my mother's was Anastasia.

Y: It's a nice name. I like that name.

A: Yeah, Anastasia. But in the United States somehow they got to call her Nellie. I didn't like Nellie. (Y: Yeah) Uh, but uh, anyway. So that was, that was it. They never, my parents never learned to speak english fluently. They spoke with an accent because, they never went to school. When they came to the United States there were not schools where the foreigners could go to learn the language, especially where they were already adults in their thirties and forties, and so forth. So um, so they never learned to really speak fluently. They learned to speak english, and they were able to you know, get along. And at home they insisted that we children spoke Ukraine. They uh, and I can see now that it was uh, they were right. They said, when you go to school you will learn english. But if you don't learn to speak your native language, or our native language while you're still at home before you go to school, you'll never learn it. You'll never go back to that. It will be very rare for anybody, for an american child to uh, to study the language of their parents. There were church organizations that established schools. And there were fraternal organizations. The Jewish people had their Jewish



schools, you know, but they were set up privately by organizations, or by synagogues, or churches. And um, but I learned to speak Ukraine fluently at home. And uh, (--)

Y: Did you have brothers, sisters?

A: I have three brothers.

Y: And you were the only uh (--)

A: I was the oldest one.

Y: Only daughter they had?

A: The only daughter. Yeah. Mother had seven children, but three died. So, and I remember one time when I was already uh, you know, maybe thirteen or fourteen, one neighbor woman came to visit my mother and she was asking, "how many children did you have?" Mother said, "seven, but only four are alive." And this woman said, "oh, that's a good average." I was so shocked when I heard it. But that was absolutely true. That the, in that period in the uh, around World War I, and right afterwards, 50% of the children did not survive among working class families, you know. And then you know the figures from 1912 in Lawrence, that many children who worked in the mills uh, two, three years after they started working they died. A very large percentage of them died before they had their fifth anniversary in the mill. And many of the adults, the women who worked in the mills, lived to be twenty-five, between twenty-five and thirty and they died, because of the atmosphere, you know, the bad working conditions. In silk we didn't have lint to, like they had in cotton mills, or even in the woolen mills. You know, you had lot of this lint in the air and that would settle on their lungs. And we used to think it was consumption. And we didn't associate it right away with the plant, with the working conditions. It was really after World War II that the unions in the cotton mills discovered that actually there was, this lint was settling on the lungs of the people, and they got was was called brown lung. And the miners, the coal dust would get into their lungs and they got black lung. Um, and many died early.

Y: I heard from former textile workers that uh, especially cotton mills, were dangerous for the lungs, (A: that's right) but not the woolens. I don't know if it is true, because uh, I mean if uh (--)

A: Well the cotton mills more so, but there was, there was you know, the little particles of wool that existed in the woolen mills too. So you had some of that in the woolen mills.

Y: Some of the Italian people told me that they never tried to work in the cotton mill. In fact there were not many in Lawrence because they moved in 1920's. (A: No, there were very) But uh, they uh, I did not understand what the difference between the cotton and woolen. I mean if it goes uh, if those particles go (--)

A: Well there is, there (--) The lint is finer and there's more of it in the air, you know? (Y: Umhm) And uh, (Y: In cotton mills you mean?) in cotton mills, yeah. The lint is very, sometimes it was so thick in the cotton mills, that you put your hand out like this and you couldn't see it. You would like just seeing it through a screen or something, you know? And uh, in the silk mills they didn't have that. But it was the temperature (--)

TAPE II, SIDE ONE ENDS.

PHOTOGRAPHS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE

SHIFTING GEARS photograph binder